

Light of the World

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[0 : 00] And so, this evening I'd just like us to continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount and look at these verses for a short while.

And as you know, the Sermon on the Mount was of course a sermon which Jesus taught and he preached to the multitudes who followed him. And as we said before, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was to teach those who have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven through faith and repentance.

It was to teach them, that is us, it's to teach us how to live as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. And we're to live as those who emulate and mirror our lives on the King of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are to live as kings imitating and mirroring King Jesus. And so what Jesus is telling us in the Sermon on the Mount is that through faith and repentance we are to live as a restored, renewed and redeemed people.

And as we've said time and time again, the theme and the thrust of this sermon is Christ-centred living for Christ-centred lives. Christ-centred living for Christ-centred lives.

[1 : 17] Christ-centred living for Christ-centred lives. And how we began our study of this challenging sermon, we saw that in the opening lines of this, we've just read that there are nine beatitudes, nine marks that reveal the marks of Christian character and conduct, which is to be present in the lives of those who are citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And Jesus says that we're to possess the marks of humility, we're to hate sin, we're to be meek, we're to hunger and thirst for more and more righteousness, we're to show mercy because we've received mercy, we're to be pure in heart, we're to be peacemakers, and we are to rejoice and be glad, even when we are persecuted.

But as we proceeded last time to look at this challenging sermon, we saw that in this paragraph which we've just read, Jesus wants to illustrate to us as to how these marks of Christian character and conduct, these beatitudes, he wants to illustrate to us how they're to be exemplified in our lives.

And Jesus does that by using the illustration of salt and light. And last time we considered the fact that as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are called to be the salt of the earth.

And we're to have this, and as the salt of the earth, we're to have these preserving qualities in a rotting and decaying society. And we're to have this purifying influence in an impure and polluted generation.

[2 : 53] And we're to do that by being distinct and different and separate from the world. But now, this evening, we're looking at the second illustration which Jesus used, the illustration of light.

As we mentioned last time, one of the great abilities Jesus had as a preacher was to use ordinary, everyday objects and incorporate them into his sermons or his parables.

For Jesus, he had this unique ability to capture our attention and captivate our imagination through his sermon illustrations.

And we asked last time, what makes for a good sermon illustration? And we said that in the case of sermon illustrations, the salt and light that Jesus used are applicable not only to his day and generation, but they're applicable to every person and to every day and generation.

But the question which Jesus wants to challenge us with by using these two illustrations of salt and light is the question, what is your Christianity really like?

[4 : 08] What is your Christianity really like? Now what Jesus is saying through these sermon illustrations is that as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, our Christianity must resemble salt and our Christianity must resemble light.

You are the salt of the earth. And now he says, you are the light of the world. And as an illustration and as a preacher, these verses in verses 14 to 16, we're given an insight as to how good a preacher Jesus really was.

Because in the day and generation that we live in, there, I don't know if you know about it, but there are many books written about preaching and how to preach. There are books like, with the titles, Ministering Like the Master, or How Sermons Work, or E.N.D. Campbell's book, Pray, Plan, Prepare, Preach.

But all of these books, they've taken their guide and their framework for preaching from the true prince of preacher, Jesus Christ. And I say that because the usual guide for preparing sermons is the simple format, statement, illustration, application.

Statement, illustration, application. State, illustrate, apply. And here in this great sermon on the mount, that's what we see.

[5 : 40] We see the statement, Jesus says, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Then the illustration. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Then the application. And in the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

State, illustrate, apply. State, illustrate, apply. And so I'd like us to consider these challenging words from the sermon of Jesus under these three simple headings.

Statement, illustration, and application. So we'll look firstly at his statement. He says, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

And what we see in this statement of Jesus when he says, you are the light of the world, is what we saw in the last statement of Jesus when he said, you are the salt of the earth.

[6 : 46] And what Jesus is saying in both cases is that the emphasis is upon you. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

And Jesus is emphatically saying to all those who are part of the kingdom by faith and repentance, you. You are who are Christians.

You, not the world, not the earth, but you. You are to have an influence upon all those who are around you. You are to be an effective witness, not only in your workplace, but in your home, in your community, and in your congregation.

You are not to compromise your faith or the standards of scripture. You are to be consistent. You are to be distinct. You are to be different. You are to be separate.

And when Jesus says to us, you are the light of the world, the contrast is static. It's so static. And the contrast is so sharp.

[7 : 49] Because there's no greater contrast. And there's no greater separation than the contrast and separation between light and darkness. And when Jesus says that we are the light of the world, he wants us to consider the light of the world.

Because when God created the world, in that first act of the creation account of Genesis 1, you'll remember that the first words that God spoke, it is that he spoke into the darkness and said, let there be light.

And there was a light. But in that creation account, right in Genesis 1, after speaking about the light, we are told that when he saw the light, he saw that it was good.

And as a result of the light being good, God divided the light from darkness. He separated that. And since the beginning of creation, that division, that separation, between light and darkness, has remained.

And so the point that Jesus is driving home in his statement, is that we as Christians, we are not to be worldly. And as lights in darkness, we are not to be indistinguishable from those who are in our home, our workplace, our community, our congregation.

[9 : 22] Because as those who are part of the kingdom of heaven, we have been called out of darkness, into his marvellous light. Where we once walked in darkness, according to the course of this world, blinded by the God of this world.

But the God who is light, in whom there is no darkness at all, says James. He's not only the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, at the beginning of creation.

But, says Paul, he's also the God who has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

And now, my friend, as those who have been enlightened, we are to walk in the light, distinct from darkness. We're to walk as those who are known and seen, as the children of light.

You are the light of the world. And your light, says Jesus, is to be so distinct from the darkness, that it's to be like a city which is upon a hill, that cannot be hidden.

[10 : 36] And I believe that the reference to the city, is not a reference to any city, but to the city, which every Jew would have known about, and every Jew was acquainted with.

And I say that because, I believe the city which Jesus was alluding to, was the city of Jerusalem. For as you know, the city of Jerusalem was this large, fortified city, with its walls, and its iron gates, and it was built upon a high mountain, called Mount Zion.

And as a city, Jerusalem could be seen for miles. Its location was miles above sea level. And it was this mighty fortress, which housed the temple.

And it was a place, which many Jews, as we saw when we looked at all those songs of ascent, we saw that the Jews would travel there, for their annual festivals. And so what's interesting about Jesus' statement, and the reference to the city upon a hill, is that one of the annual festivals, which many of the Jewish pilgrims, would have to travel to Jerusalem for, was the Feast of Tabernacles.

And during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a week-long festival, it celebrated the occasion, when the Lord had provided for the children of Israel, whilst they were in the wilderness.

[12 : 00] The Lord had led the children of Israel, through the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. And so to commemorate that historical occasion, every evening during the Feast of Tabernacles, after the sun had finally set, there were four large lamps, which were lit in the temple courtyard.

And it said that these lights were so big, and so bright, that when they were lit, they cast this huge light, over the whole city.

Every quarter was lit up. So that the whole city was ablaze with light. And it's, I suppose as you could say, as Jesus says here, it was like a city set on a hill, which could not be hidden.

But what's really interesting is that on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, at the close of all the celebrations, one of the lamps was to be left unlit.

So three were lit, and then one was left. And this was done in order to symbolise the full salvation of the Lord, to say that it had not yet come.

[13 : 14] The Messiah hadn't arrived. And what we must understand, that it was in this context, that it was in that context of these three lamps lit, and one left unlit.

It's in that context in John chapter 8, during the Feast of Tabernacles, that Jesus stepped forward, in amongst all the crowd, and he revealed his identity by saying, I am the light of the world.

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. And so the teaching that Jesus is giving to us, is that we must know, and we need to know, that he is the light of the world.

But in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching us, as those who emulate and mirror our lives, on the King of the Kingdom of Heaven, we too are to emulate and mirror our light, on the true light of the world.

We are to be as the light of the world. We are to reflect the true light, who is Jesus Christ. But if we go back to the initial moments of creation, when God separated the light from darkness, we know that God also, in the creation account, he created the greater light, and the lesser light.

[14 : 41] The greater light being the sun, the lesser light being the moon. And I'm sure you've heard this before, that the light which is produced by the moon, isn't a light which is self-generated.

The light doesn't originate with the moon, because it's a light which is reflected from the sun. And the only reason why the moon shines, is because the surface of the moon, is reflecting the light of the sun.

And I believe that it's in that way, that Jesus is teaching us, that he's saying, we are the light of the world, only because he is the light of the world. And the more we are like Jesus, the more we will be separate from the darkness, the more we reflect him, and the more we will be distinct from the darkness.

And the more we mirror him, we will be brighter lights as those who follow him, and reflect the light of our Saviour.

You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. That's his statement. But then Jesus proceeds in a sermon, to illustrate his statement.

[16 : 00] So we look secondly at his illustration. His illustration. He says, Nor do people light a lamp, and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

The illustration which Jesus seeks to employ in his sermon, sermon. This one which would be very familiar to a Jew, and I suppose it's illustration, we're all familiar with it, because even though we're in the 21st century, with all our low energy lamps, and our energy saving lighting, when a power cut comes, we're still reduced to the old fashioned wax candle.

And when we look at this illustration, Jesus starts with the negative. And he does so in order for us to see how absurd it would be to light a candle or an oil lamp, and then hide it.

He says, You don't see people in their homes lighting a lamp, and then putting it under a bushel. Now, a bushel wasn't necessarily a basket, but it was this large mixing bowl, which would be used maybe for baking or for cooking.

And it's probably made of metal or clay, and it was big enough to hold it at eight liters. And Jesus says, You don't see people in their homes lighting this, their lamps, and then hiding it under the bowl.

[17 : 30] You don't see that, because that would be absurd. And the point of the illustration that he uses is to make us think that lighting a lamp in the first place, when it's going to be hidden away and ineffective in its purpose of giving out light.

It's to make us think that lighting the lamp in the first place is pointless. Because the lamp isn't going to do what it was meant to do. For the lamp, it's meant to produce light and dispel darkness.

But if the light is hidden, and the light is concealed, then it's ineffective. And Jesus is saying in his illustration, you would never hide the lamp.

You would never conceal the light. Because that would be a waste. No, no, no. You would put the lamp on a lamp stand. And you would put it in the center of the room.

You would put the only source of light in the house, in the place where it's going to be most effective. And so what we need to see is that as Jesus illustrates his statement, he's emphasizing to us that if we are the light of the world, and we are hiding away, we are ineffective.

[18 : 47] If we are the light of the world, and we are hiding away, we are ineffective. If our Christianity is a concealed Christianity, if our Christian witness is blending into the world, and there is no distinction, then we're just like the salt.

Because Jesus has already told us that salt, which has lost its saltiness, it's good for nothing. It's useless.

It's useless. And what Jesus is bluntly saying to us, just like he said with the salt, is that if we are indistinguishable from the world, our Christian witness is as good as useless.

If we cease to be distinct, if we cease to be distinct, and if our light is growing dim, because our love of the world is increasing and gaining, then we are failing to live as a Christian should.

My friend, our Christian witness becomes ineffective when we don't live consistently as a Christian should.

[19 : 59] Because if we become assimilated to the world, and to non-Christians, then what we do, and where we go, and how we speak, and if we stop reflecting the true light, and we become over, we are overcome by the darkness of the world, we'll lose our influence upon those around us.

If we become so like the world that there's no longer any distinction between the world and the Christian, our purpose as those in the kingdom of heaven is like a hidden lamp.

It's useless. It's useless. And I mentioned this last time, that only 50 years ago, Martin Lloyd-Jones emphasized the distinction that needs to be present between the world and the Christian.

And I repeat it because I believe that nothing has changed. Whatever anyone else wants to say, nothing has changed. Because Lloyd-Jones said, the glory of the gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.

It's then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first. And was that not the warning which is given by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 6, when Paul asks the question, what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?

[21 : 34] What communion hath light with darkness? What friendship has Christ with Belial? Or what part has the believer with the unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

For as Paul says, you are the temple of the living God. You are the city which is set upon a hill that cannot be hidden.

You are the place from which the light is shining. Therefore, he says, you must come out from among them and be separate. You must be distinct.

You must not blend into the darkness. You are not to be a concealed Christian which is veiled and unknown. No, says Jesus, put your lamp on the lampstand and keep it burning.

Keep it burning. And it was at this point that one commentator said, this homely illustration brings out the important function of discipleship.

[22 : 44] Whereas our purpose is, as disciples, is to give light. Now when I was thinking about this, I thought about the fact that there are three things that are needed to keep a lamp burning.

Because I remember when I was in school, and I'm sure that you learned it yourself, there are three things which need to be present in order to start a fire. Because you need fuel, heat, and oxygen.

Fuel, heat, and oxygen. I've said this before, probably in another way, but the three things we need to keep our light burning is fuel, heat, and oxygen.

Our fuel in our lamp is of course the word, the word of God. Without the word in our life and being part of our daily light, we will grow dim.

So not what the psalmist confessed in the psalm we were singing, thy word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my palm. that should be our confession, the word of God is the fuel to our lamp.

[23 : 53] But the heat which is also needed to keep our light burning could be considered as prayer. For without prayer and dependence upon the Lord and fellowship with the Lord we'll grow cold in our walk with the Lord.

And there'll be no warmth in our spiritual life. And so we may, we're to pray continually and bring everything to the Lord in prayer. We're to cast all our cares upon the Lord because he cares for us.

But the last ingredient which is needed to keep our light burning is oxygen. Oxygen can be considered as fellowship. Well as a Christian we need fellowship.

Fellowship with one another and fellowship with the Lord. We need to be in the means of grace. We need to be in the prayer meeting. We need to make every endeavour to be in the house of God with the people of God.

And my friend if you can be here please don't stay away. Don't make a poor excuse because gathering in the fellowship of God's people is for our own good and for our own benefit.

[24 : 59] It's for our own growth. And so we need these three ingredients. Fuel, heat and oxygen. If they're neglected then the lamp will not light. and in the same manner if we neglect word, prayer and fellowship then our lamp will be starved of its necessary ingredients and our light will not burn brightly if at all.

And as the old children's hymn goes give me oil in my lamp keep me burning. That should be our desire. Keep me burning.

Keep me burning. Keep me burning. But how do we keep our lamp burning? Yes we need the word we need prayer we need fellowship but what does that look like?

And we can do all these things I say that because we can do all these things and sometimes we can do it mechanically without even thinking of it. We can read the Bible we can pray we can come to church without any thought of it.

But there must be this one overriding ingredient which is present in our lamps in order to keep our lamp burning. And I say that because you remember in the book of Revelation we're confronted with the church of Ephesus.

[26 : 23] And the church in Ephesus along with the seven churches in Asia they were all described as the seven golden lampstands. But to the church in Ephesus Jesus commended them for their patience and their works and their perseverance.

But says Jesus I have something against you. And this is what always challenges me and causes me to search myself.

Because regardless of how good the lampstand of Ephesus was Jesus went right to the heart of the matter and he said you have left your first love.

You have left your first love. And the same can be true of us. Regardless of these ingredients which must be present in our life to keep our lamp burning regardless of word prayer and fellowship.

If it's not done with love for Jesus it's all done in vain. If we have left our first love then we're not lamps which are burning as they ought to be burning.

[27 : 38] If we have left our first love Jesus' recommendation is go back to your first love. And in the following verse in Revelation Jesus tells the church in Ephesus how to love again.

He says repent. repent. And you know that's the advice that John gave to the church in Ephesus and many other churches in his first letter because he said if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

If we confess our sins if we repent he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. My friend let's not lose sight of our first love.

Let's not hide our light. Let's stay close to the light. Let's reflect the light. Let's walk in the light. Let's do as Jesus goes on to say let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

State, illustrate, apply. So lastly and briefly we see application. Application.

[29 : 04] He says in the same way let your light shine before others so that they would see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

As a true prince of preachers having made his statement and illustrated his statement Jesus now makes the application. He applies the truth to his listeners.

And based upon what he said already Jesus encourages us and urges us to let our light shine before others. We're to let our light shine as lights in the world because it's a borrowed light.

It's a reflection of the true light of the world. And here Jesus encourages us to let our light shine for a purpose so that others may see your good works he says.

The purpose is so that others will see it. Now the good works which are to be seen they're not to be seen so that we can be congratulated and applauded.

[30 : 10] The good works are not to be understood in the sense of doing good towards others although that's in a sense implied. The good works that Jesus refers to is said in the sense of being a faithful and consistent witness to those around you.

The good works are when you don't hide your lamp under the bushel and conceal the light which you possess. The good works are making sure that others see that you're like that city set upon a hill which cannot be hidden.

The good works are making sure that others will know that you are the lamp on the lampstand which lights the darkness in the house or the workplace or the community.

The good works which Jesus speaks of is the desire to follow Jesus more closely and to listen to Jesus more intently and to love Jesus more faithfully.

The good works which Jesus is teaching us about is that we are to imitate him. We are to reflect his light. We are to mirror our lives on him because he is the true light which came into the world.

[31 : 25] He is the light which John says shined in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. And so the application which Jesus presents to us is that the only way to bring glory to our father in heaven is so reflect and imitate and mirror Jesus in our life.

And what I find so interesting about this is that the life and ministry of Jesus was all about bringing glory to his father. The personal work of Jesus Christ was all about giving the father the glory.

Now is that not what Paul meant when he described God's whole purpose in redemption and those precious words are in Philippians 2 speaking of the humiliation of Christ coming from glory into this world where Paul was encouraging Christians to be imitators of Christ and he said let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God but he made himself of no reputation took upon him the form of a servant made in the likeness of men found in the fashion as a man he humbled himself he became obedient obedient all the way even the death of the cross but God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every other name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow every tongue confess in heaven and on earth and under the earth that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father but it was from that illustration that Paul used that he went on to apply his message in Philippians 2 and he went on to say therefore my beloved work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it's God which works in you both to will and to do for his own good pleasure do all things without murmurings and disputings why says Paul that you may be blameless and harmless as the children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world my dear friend it's safe to say that it's not easy to be a Christian it's not easy to be a light in darkness but no matter how crooked and perverse the generation is we have been called out of darkness into his marvelous light and our sole purpose as those who are the light of the world and those who are the salt of the earth our purpose like King

Jesus our purpose is to give glory to our Father in heaven as our hearts resign as we sit under the preaching of Jesus and listen to the sermon on the mount that in our lives we would seek to bring glory to our Father in heaven state illustrate a plan statement you are the light of the world a city set on a hill cannot be hidden illustration nor do people light a lamp but put it under a basket but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house application in the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven may the Lord bless these things to us to you